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Self-organization of Students: Realities and Development Prospects

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Abstract

The article presents an analysis of the significance of student associations on the basis of self-organization that gives young people an opportunity to correct and develop personality potential within the framework of educational institutions for overcoming an uncertainty situation in contemporary risk societies. The aim of the research is to reveal characteristics of a self-organization process in the context of students' association activities, to evaluate real practices of developing students' associations on the basis of personal self-organization processes, to disclose contradictions and factors inhibiting the development of this process in educational institutions. As a result, it has been found that the characteristics include correlation of students' personality traits, commonality of participation motives and commonality of the value basis in the process of organizing effective vital activity of an association. The indicated propositions are the basis and guidelines for building effective work of the relative departments and services of a university.

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1. Introduction

Contemporary societies are dynamically developing systems going through a succession of modernization stages. The fundamental socio-economic and socio-cultural changes occurring in them are directed towards complication of internal and external interrelations, ambiguity of phenomena and processes, and strengthening of uncertainty (risk society) (Morin & Orsini, 2014). The changes, the uncertainty becoming one of the main

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characteristics of the risk society are the result of the changes in the traditional, established foundations of the existing contemporary societies; this necessitates the conduction of the applied research on issues related to a mechanism of self-organizational processes for improving social integration, raising the level of social subjectness and social activeness, building effective life strategies and overcoming the situation of instability.

The instability and uncertainty stage is a risk situation for students when young people choose their own variant of development from the possible alternatives. Situations when young people demonstrate anxiety and uncertainty about their future, and the decline in mental health are a manifestation of a destabilizing behavior in a risk situation, which is a characteristic of disintegration and social decay (Roueche & Roueche, 1999)

Such multi-functionality and ambiguity of the situation have led to the necessity of developing students' ability to solve their problems independently, to adapt to new socio-economic conditions of the market economy, to develop skills of independent life and to participate in self-government. Higher educational institution with its own service for solving certain students' problems should carry out activities aimed at overcoming the current situation by increasing self-organization processes (providing the students with an opportunity to show their worth, to develop personality traits, to improve social subjectness, etc.). One of the mechanisms for the solution can be enhancing grouping processes by creating students' associations, taking into account the constituent elements of self-organization (personal and collective) (Porta, Diani, 2006; Stuart, Lido, Morgan, Solomon & May).

A positive "effect of self-organization" emerging in the process of students' interaction within the association points to an optimal coordination and interaction of the structural elements of the association. The increase of students' social activeness, their desire to develop and adapt to the external conditions are possible owing to the development of the elements of personal self-organization. To achieve goals, it is important to carry out a purposeful synthesis of actions in the outline of running every association as a social organization (Hanson, 2014), (Hasan, Crocker, Rousseliere, Dumont, Hale & Srinivas, 2010).

The processes of creating students' associations should be directed toward making them socially and practically oriented (since students must have a conscious and responsible attitude to the opportunities and prospects of their professional, cultural and moral self-organization); toward overcoming the influence of random attractors; and to developing social subjectness for participating in social management (Finn & Zimmer, 2012). The insufficient knowledge on the development of self-organization processes, and their impact on the growth of student grouping have generated a need for the given research in a student environment.

2. Objectives, methodology and research design

The aim of the research is to identify characteristics of a self-organization process in the context of students' association activities, to evaluate real practices of developing students' associations on the basis of personal self-organization processes, to find out contradictions and factors inhibiting the development of this process in educational institutions.

The main methods for achieving the set goals in the context of the issue under study are a review and analysis of theoretical works (Crotty, 1998) related to the study of the process of student self-organization in a social system, as well as the results of the empirical data of the existing investigations on the studied issues (Singleton & Straits, 2010).

At the first stage, an observation method was applied; with its help, primary information on the issue under study was obtained in educational institutions (Bryman, 2012; Neuman, 2013). The following facts were established: low activity of students in the processes of grouping without regard for self-organization (no connection between structural elements in the group), practice of creating associations at the initiative of the administration of educational institutions.

At the second stage the research was conducted in the form of a sociological survey, using an analysis method and ranging (Matthews & Ross, 2010). The obtained data were used in each block as indicators of dependant variables. Participants of the survey were Russian students of the Far East universities of Khabarovsk and Blagoveshchensk (aged 16-22, divided according to the types of educational institutions: 176 students of higher educational institutions, 100 college students). A distributing criterion was department, year of study and gender. The sample was formed at each university separately and randomly at the stage of the selection of respondents. The respondents were given a designed questionnaire with questions of open and closed types where they were to choose a variant of the answer that reflected their position. The survey aimed at studying characteristics of a self-organization process.

The questionnaire consists of four units: №1. Self-organization, general issues; №2. Characteristics of a self-organization process from an angle of personality traits; №3. Characteristics of a self-organization process from an

angle of students' motivation; №4. Characteristics of a self-organization process from an angle of studying the students' value basis.

We now give the tested hypothesis in the relevant units:

№1 - knowing the reasons, factors (external - influencing grouping processes (collective self-organization), and internal - influencing dynamics of intra group processes (personality self-organization), it is possible to render assistance to students in the process of participation and performance of group activities, to educational organizations in arranging the work with young people, and also to the heads of student associations in building their work;

№2 - the correlation of personal qualities of the people in the group is a necessary condition for their purposeful interaction;

№3 - priority factors of motivation (personal, social, etc.) influence activeness in the association;

№4 - values, their commonality and differences are the basis for bringing people together for achieving common goals and vice versa.

3. Discussion of the research outcomes

Consider the obtained results.

Unit №1. Self-organization, general questions.

When analyzing student associations as a significant social system, it is necessary to determine the attitude of the students themselves towards them. In the course of the survey, respondents were asked a series of questions about the significance of students associations.

Analysis of the answers to the question, "What for should students associate in organizations?" shows that for 69% of respondents the main purpose of associating is a desire to expand the social circle; 14% want to be morally satisfied; 10% - to avoid loneliness; 4% - to become famous; 3% are interested in material welfare. Socialization is ranked first by students, due to the specificity of their age. Satisfaction of such needs - the desire to find themselves and their place in the group, to feel part of a group - is a significant motivation for joining an association. Communicating in a group, students have an opportunity to find friends, to make necessary contacts, as well as to have an opportunity to develop or correct their skills and personality traits. When evaluating the reasons for joining an association, one may notice the prevalence of personality motivation aimed at developing skills of personal self-organization, self-development, self-education, and of a pursuit for the necessary social experience.

Analysis of the students' answers to the question aiming to reveal the basic principles of student associations gave the following ranking: common interests – 64%; joint activities – 35%; high activeness – 11 %. Common interests, serving as a motivating force for purposeful and practical activities, being an objective impulse, a pursuit of the individual, function only through various forms of human activity. Joint activity is a consequence of a harmonious combination of common interests in the process of understanding, accepting and achieving goals in a collective unity on the basis of productive fulfillment of the set tasks.

Students' associations are significant elements of the development, correction and formation of a personality, but the proportion of students who are members of associations is low: of all the students under the survey only 25% belong to a student association (some students are members of several associations), 75% do not belong to any.

Further study of the opinion of the students who do not belong to any associations has shown that 19% of the respondents "would like to join some organization"; 37% - "would not"; 31% - "this desire arises only sometimes, and it doesn't last long"; 13% - "I'd like to but I don't know where to apply". Thus, according to the survey, a potentially active "reserve" may be students with a distinct desire to join a student society ("yes"), but who for some external or internal reason have not done that so far; students without definite motives ("this desire arises sometimes, and it doesn't last long"); and informationally illiterate students ("I don't know where to apply"). The obtained data may become guidelines for the activities requiring close attention, deep study and discussion on all levels: from the university administration and services working with the youth to student organizations.

Analysis of the answers to the question, "What prevents you from joining a student association?" has enabled us to determine the main obstacles: "no time because I work" - 35% of respondents (students are compelled to work, which reduces the possibility of active participation in student associations – time resource); "None of my friends is a member of them, so I won't join it either"- 22% (influence of a reference group on the choice of a relevant activity); "I don't know where to apply" – 30% (shortage of information for engaging a student in an activity); "a lot of people I am not familiar with" – 13%. The selected indicators show that students experience

shortage of resources: of time and information, of human and material resources; this, in its turn, reduces the possibilities for students to show their worth within the framework of student associations, and to produce results. In the phenomenon of self-organization the study of human resources in the social system is specific: they are studied not so much through quantitative indicators as through relationships (collective self-organization) and formation of a new quality (personal self-organization).

Analysis of the really existing student associations has revealed the prevalence of associations of social orientation – 30%, of creative – 21%, of scientific – 10%, and the rest – 39%. As to the choice of priority types of the activities of students' associations, 59% of respondents prefer extra-curricular activities (arranging and holding extra-curricular activities: development and implementation of projects – 24%; protection of students' rights and interests -15%; other - 20%). A wide range of activities of associations enables a greater number of students to fulfill their human potential but the prevalence of a creative line in the activities may prevent the students who do not regard themselves as creative from being active.

Of the main missions of student organizations at the university, the following guidelines in their activities were identified as significant: participation in various processes of the educational institution - 30%; good public deeds – 25%; creation of a positive image of the higher educational institution in the city – 20%; protection of students' interests – 20%; other – 5%. Regarding associations as a real force for solving problems in quality preparation of professionals, school administrators should draw students' attention to the importance and prospect of their participation in the association as a launching pad for developing their personality, raising their educational level, and obtaining relative knowledge and skills.

In the process of analyzing the obtained data we have made a number of conclusions concerning the characteristics of self-organization processes:

- such motives improve self-organization, both personal and collective;
- correlation of personality traits facilitates or inhibits grouping (collective self-organization);
- commonality and difference of values serve as a reason for association;
- shortage of resources reduces a person's activity in the process of learning and beyond it.

The obtained results correlate with the characteristics of a self-organization process that were identified during the theoretical study of the scientific literature. Further research involves a more detailed study of each of the identified characteristics.

Unit № 2. Characteristics of the process of self-organization from an angle of personality traits.

The positive effect of self-organization depends on the improvement of its participants' inner structure to which can be attributed manifesting personality traits, motivation and value basis in some way affecting the climate in the group, performance and duration of activities, etc.

Personality traits of the people in a group are a condition of the expedient interaction in this group. It is for this reason that this important factor must be taken into account when accepting new members and organizing the work.

When asked, "What is your attitude to other people's shortcomings?" 50% of students answered "tolerant", 27% - "indifferent", 20% - "not paying attention to", 3% - "other." Tolerant attitude towards other people's shortcomings enables us to suggest a certain degree of consciousness in relation to other people's manifestations by correct understanding of the actions. Indifference and lack of attention to the shortcomings of others may reflect varying degree of disinterest, isolation, absorption in some activity and, probably, difficulties in the interaction with other people.

Analysis of the respondents' answers to the question aimed at identifying three positive and three negative qualities of contemporary students is presented in Table 1 (The table shows qualities of the highest rating; it was possible to point out several).

Table 1. Positive and negative qualities of contemporary students

Positive qualities	Negative qualities
Activeness– 64%	Laziness– 79%
Creativity– 57%	Indifference– 49%
Initiative– 44%	Lack of commitment – 39%

On the one hand, positive qualities can be expected to facilitate the manifestation of a positive "effect of self-organization"; however, a hindrance in this case is a set of diametrically opposite qualities. With good personal

self-organization (from an angle of compatibility of personality traits) there emerge optimal conditions for the development of collective self-organization (activities in groups).

In identifying students' inclination to the performance of a particular activity, the following results were obtained: 27% of respondents are prepared to be engaged in manufacturing; 27% - in holding activities; 21% - in management; 13% - in the development of projects, etc., 175 – other. The choice of activities is associated with inner conditions of development that are formed in the process of the individual's interaction with the outside world. For example, a successful and precise teamwork involves division of duties and responsibilities, but unity in the division cannot occur by accident, it appears in the process of competent actions of the leader who has more pronounced qualities of an individual.

Analysis of the assessment of their own resources in case of the independent fulfillment of the received task demonstrates that 60% of students will bring the fulfillment to the end, 23% are not sure, 15% will bring the fulfillment of the task to the end but they will not do anything else afterwards; 2% will not cope with it. Students' personality traits developed to a proper degree will allow them to cope with the assumed obligations and to bring the work to an end. Resources of the individual are a set of certain qualities of the subject; qualities that determine their activeness, the pursuit of a productive outcome of activities that influences the entire association. The 15% of students who "will bring the fulfillment of the task to an end, but will not do anything else afterwards" should become an object of attention of psychological services of educational institutions, to be assigned to the "active" type.

The effect of self-organization is made possible by increasing the effectiveness of mutual reinforcement, including various personality traits in the process of performing the relevant activities. The correlation of the individual's personal qualities in an organized group, is a condition of their expedient interaction. If the individuals' traits are observed to be completely incompatible, it is not possible to achieve effectiveness of the activities, and this can lead to the disintegration of the group. Conversely, with good compatibility, there are optimal conditions for the vital activity of the association.

Unit № 3. Characteristics of a self-organization process from an angle of students' motivation.

Analysis of the respondents' attitude to students' associations; it should be determined when defining priority factors of personality motivation. Participants of organizations (25% of all the respondents) joined the association consciously and voluntarily in 96% of instances. The main motives were as follows (there was an opportunity to chose from several options): "to get experience for the future professional activities" – 45%; "to be useful for the society" – 43% (taking into account the priority of the students' associations activities - social orientation); "I like participating in group activities" – 36%; "just to do something apart from learning" – 26%; "material benefit" – 6%; "I want to have an appraisal of the administration" – 3%. The survey results demonstrate an orientation first of all towards personality development, while social status motives take the second place. Without considering the motives that an individual brings into the performance of a particular activity when implementing goals, it is impossible to understand social actions, social bonding and relationships involved in achieving the set goal. The consciously perceived motives enhance personality self-organization.

A motive is an incentive to commit a behavioral act which is generated by the system of human needs, and is perceived by an individual with a varying degree of awareness, or s/he may be not aware of it at all. In the process of performing behavioral acts, motives, being dynamic phenomena, may transform (change), which is possible in all phases of the performance of the action; and the behavioral act often finishes not according to the initial motivation, but to the transformed one (Alsted, 2005). Analysis of the answers to the question about the ability to always describe the motives of their behavior has shown that 40% do that, 30% sometimes think about them, 23% cannot, 7% never think about that.

When asked, "Do your motives change when you participate in a student association's affair?" 52% of respondents indicate that they change occasionally; 25% - they do not change; 19% - they do; 4% - they always change. Thus, the formation of students' motivation and self-organization is accompanied by changes in the sphere of self-organization (development, correction of personal traits). On the other hand, a particular motive does not unambiguously determine the motivation of activities, the contribution of factors of the particular situation must also be taken into consideration.

Self-organization and motivation are interrelated, since the development mechanism of motivation is governed both by the logic of an individual's real experience and by the logic of self-development of the individual, who independently and actively builds his/her motivation sphere. The processes of self-organization will proceed

faster if conditions are created for the development of incentive motivational aspects and for the fixation of intrinsic positive motivation. The process of the consideration of motivation is complicated; however, the systematic study of people's attitudes to work, evaluation of a particular situation, consideration of reasons that have generated it can provide knowledge and mechanisms of the development of self-organization, both personal and collective.

Unit №4. Characteristics of a self-organization process from an angle of the study of students' value base.

The commonality and difference of values are the basis for bringing people together for achieving common goals, and vice versa.

Rokeach (1973) distinguishes between two classes of values - terminal and instrumental. He defines terminal values as beliefs that some ultimate goal of individual existence (for example, health as value, public recognition), from personal and social points of view, is worth pursuing; instrumental values - as beliefs that some mode of action (for example sense of humor, responsibility), from personal and social points of view, is preferable in any situations. In fact, differentiation of terminal and instrumental values produces sufficiently traditional distinction of value goals and value instruments.

As a result, the following priority value goals with the highest percentage were pointed out (it was possible to choose several options): health (physical and mental) - 64%; happy family life - 51%; good and loyal friends - 36%; financially secure life - 30% (this indicator was not in the three top values). The life guidelines to which these indicators refer do not need to be substantiated, they are significant by themselves. The obtained figures correlate with the tendencies described in the contemporary sociological studies on young people's values, indicating such priorities as family, health and friends.

Value instruments were marked in the following ratings (it was possible to select several options): honesty - 55%; responsibility - 40%; sense of humor - 33%. They embody a certain situational goal, serve as an instrument to achieve other, important goals. Value goals and values instruments must be consistent with each other for the harmony of the individual.

One more question was asked during the survey, "What do you personally gain or will gain from the participation in a student organization?" The responses indicate that as a priority significance (value) (it was possible to select several options) is attached to an opportunity for self-realization - 88%; development of competencies required in the future - 51%; moral satisfaction - 51%; recognizability and financial reward - 36%. The analysis demonstrates the predominance of intrinsic personality motivation in joining a students' association; motivation that is aimed at increasing their own level of development (which correlates with the data obtained in the answers to the previous questions in the questionnaire). This objective reflects the problems the young people face in the contemporary society (risk society): the fear that they will not be needed, the unstable tendencies of graduate employment on the labor market, the search for prospects, etc.

The interaction of all the constituent elements of the organization produces an effect of self-organization, positive or negative; in particular, if the structural elements are not consistent with one another, there is a negative synergetic effect; if they are adequate - positive. For example, the composition of a students' association body is constantly changing. Knowing about the effect of self-organization, when accepting a new member, one should pay attention to qualities that facilitate compatibility of this person with other members of the student self-government body (the level of knowledge may be high, but because of different values, the new member will not be able to integrate into the group and to fully show his/her worth, so there may be a discord in the functioning of the whole group).

The obtained results have confirmed that our hypotheses are provable. Today, student associations are a real force in the development of self-organization: personal (owing to the development of individual parameters) and collective (growth of the number and quality of students' associations). The study of the characteristics of the process of students' self-organization in the context of the research in the singled out directions is of interest within the framework of the perception of the attributes, characteristics and qualities of the subjects which by their nature are formed in the process of human relations, are manifested in them, and influence the emergence of new relationships and certain types of interaction.

Analysis of the research data has shown that the process of personality development takes place in activities through performing different, joint, and coordinated kinds of activities, which is confirmed by other investigations as well (Eccles & Barber, 1999; Mercier & Higgins, 2014; Gu, Shao, Guo & Lim, 2015). It has also been found that there are students' associations of various orientations, but focused more on social activities. The degree of involvement of young people in groups depends on whether they join them voluntarily or not, on the formation of group consciousness, and on positive social experience of participation in the past. Determination of

such factors will allow the formation of a responsible attitude of students to self-development, taking into consideration opportunities and prospects for their future professional self-organization, in order to overcome the situation of instability and to participate in the management of the affairs of educational institutions. Participation in the activities of the association will have a beneficial effect on the formation of a versatile, active and independent personality of a young professional. The study of the desire for and ability of grouping will help young people develop qualities needed in the transforming conditions of the society.

A number of studies of students' motivational basis (in the context of performing an activity) inducing them to participate in the affairs of the student association have shown that it is more effectively composed of determining the degree of importance of the student to him-/herself, the existence of common interests, and the desire for self-development, self-realization and self-knowledge (Gao, 2008; Granger, 2014; Nikkar-Esfahani, Jamjoom & Fitzgerald, 2012; Osteen, 2011).

The conducted research has revealed that inducing to activities are motives that contain a desire to gain social experience and to achieve self-development, and are focused on the wish to communicate, to bring benefit to people and on the desire to be noticed by the administration.

Drawing a parallel with the existing research results and our data, one can notice relation in the motivation of today's students: the first place is taken by personal motives (personal development), and only then social-status motives go. Such manifestations reflect the young people's desire to develop the necessary personality elements, in order to overcome difficulties in searching future employment, to adapt to the team, etc.

Within the framework of educational institutions, the intersections of personal and professional motives must be integrated into the syllabus components and management strategies for making conscious and significant choice according to the individual's motivation. In practice, this realization is possible through participating in student associations.

The development of self-organization and motivation is accompanied by changes in students:

- in the area of self-organization, a selection of habits, skills, and behavioral norms that enable one to adapt to a particular environment takes place.
- in the area of motivation, the process of organizing work is being set up; the individual is able to manage his/her potential not by an authority instruction but in accordance with his/her own goals.

The connection between value orientations and self-organization process is a principle of system determination. It allows one to overcome the opposition of the extrinsic and the intrinsic by means of defining another individual space.

The crisis of values of the contemporary society influences the education system (Goetz, 2014). Today, the liberal values dominate over the democratic and social ones. Research in this field indicates the predominance of a value of getting education for obtaining a social status and for raising the significance of professional activities that are performed now or will be performed in the future (Moosmayer & Siems, 2012). Values such as health, family and friends are ranked lower.

Analysis of the obtained data indicates reverse ranking in the degree of value significance: 1) health; 2) family; 3) loyal friends; 4) material welfare. Estimating the degree to which the indicated values correspond to the results of multilevel research, one can speak about the identity of "leader" values, the difference is only in the rank by the degree of importance.

The data of the conducted research cannot be viewed as an absolute entity, but only as an opportunity to consider the obtained data as a tool that reflects the actual picture of the situation in higher educational institutions, and that allows us to reveal the priority orientation of students and the attitude to the activities of students' associations. These are primary draft orientations that require additional comprehension, addition, alignment and long-time experimental approbation. Consideration of the indicated characteristics of the self-organization process in the activities of the relative departments and services of educational institutions for maintaining, enhancing and promoting these processes may become an invariant support and perspective of the effective work. Without considering the indicated characteristics and factors the work is not very productive, and very often, it is a no-load run.

4. Conclusion

The analysis of the contemporary condition of the issue of self-organization processes in educational institutions is given in the article. Basing on the analysis of the current scientific literature and empirical research, characteristics of a self-organization process have been identified that must be taken into account when organizing the work for developing the processes of grouping in a student environment.

Summing up, one can say that the purposeful synthesis of the actions of educational institution services for facilitating the development of personal and collective self-organization processes will promote satisfaction of the demand for students' transition to confidence and social activeness. Guided by the aim of education, i.e. preparation of professionals, ensuring of students' personal growth, development of their social skills and skills of social adaptation are one of the priority directions of actions.

The lines for further research may be:

- in the theoretical part of the research, subsequent scientific in-depth theoretical and empirical study in the context of the theme;
- in the empirical part, conduction of research for the in-depth study of the indicated characteristics of self-organization in educational institutions with the purpose of comparative analysis from an angle of educational institution, direction of preparation and year of study; the study of individual characteristics of the self-organization process, basing on the distinguishing of typology types of students.

One of the lines of practical work facilitating students' self-organization in higher educational institutions is introduction and use of a special-purpose program that will promote the development of self-organization by means of artificially changing the elements of social systems, taking into account the external environment that is a regulator of the necessary connections of students' extrinsic manifestations.

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